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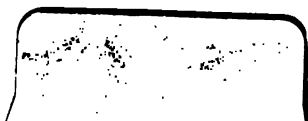
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THE LIFE OF PAUL SEIGNERET.



THE LIFE
OF
PAUL SEIGNERET,

SEMINARIST OF SAINT SULPICE ;

SHOT AT BELLEVILLE, PARIS, MAY 26, 1871.

TRANSLATED AND ABRIDGED BY

E. A. M.



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1873.



PREFACE.



IN perusing the following account of Paul Seigneret, the reader may, perhaps, be inclined to ask why a life so simple, and, until the approach of its close, so devoid of anything remarkable, was written.

The answer is, because in that life there was an integrity and consistency which turned every circumstance into a means of preparation for its end. It is the noviciate of a saint which is presented for contemplation ; the story of one who "being made perfect in a

short time, fulfilled a long time," and whose spirit of self-devotion, whether for life or death, together with his generous love of suffering, so fitted him for his early crown.

E. A. M.

PARIS, 1873.

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THE LIFE OF PAUL SEIGNERET.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH.

PAUL-MARIE-JOSEPH-CLAUDE SEIGNERET was born at Angers, December the 23rd 1845. His father was a professor at the "Lycée," or Government School of that city, a circumstance which secured to the young Paul the benefit of a careful education. He was an affectionate and intelligent child, and had from his earliest years the advantage of a Christian training from his excellent parents.

The first fifteen years of his life were spent peacefully at home; but in May 1861, his father being appointed to direct the college at Epinal, Paul was sent to the Lycée at Nancy. He was at this time still a child in appearance, impressionable and sensitive to excess. It is easy to imagine the effect produced upon a

boy of this temperament by a sudden change from home-life to the uncongenial atmosphere of a public school; his first letters therefore are naturally full of sadness. But the very event which might have overwhelmed him with discouragement, awoke in him new energy and life. No longer sheltered and surrounded by the Christian safeguards of his father's house, he felt his danger, and sought from God the assistance of which he had need. Shortly before the vacation of 1861, he wrote:—"I have had a greater longing than I can express to see you all again, ever since I have been living here alone in the midst of strangers. I am so weary of hearing nothing but coarse and revolting conversation. Ah, if you only knew in what society I find myself! Everywhere blasphemies and other nameless horrors surround me."

The previous year, at the "Petit Séminaire" at Angers, he had been present, when, as was customary, all the pupils before taking their departure for the holidays, had assembled round the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and sung an adieu to the house which was almost as dear to them as another home; and he adds, 'Oh, happy house! oh, happy inmates, who

live under so Christian, so gentle, so paternal a rule, and where the emulation in evil which reigns in the Lycée is unknown !”

At the same time he mentions with affectionate gratitude the kindness he received from several of the masters, who quickly began to understand the requirements of this exceptional disposition.

The persevering ardour with which he applied himself to his studies, resulted in his being raised to the rank of “Premier,” in June 1861, and he writes to tell his father of “the good place which God had allowed him to take, that he might not be discouraged.” However, a week later he announces “a catastrophe in Latin verses,” where he was the seventeenth of twenty, and says that what most distresses him is the thought of his father’s pain at his being “in so deplorable a place,” adding, “and yet, do not suppose that I am discouraged. No, just as I thanked God, when I was successful, so have I offered this reverse to Him. Our chaplain has lent me the ‘Imitation of Jesus Christ,’ and this book has taught me to offer all my troubles to God.”

The best proof of Paul’s sincerity is the determination with which he combated his weak-

nesses. Children generally have a fondness for sweatmeats, and the young Paul was not free from this inclination. No sooner, however, had he entered the Lycée than "to punish himself," as he says, "for his greediness," he made a vow not to permit himself to spend a halfpenny on this sort of pleasure all the time he was there. And this did not satisfy him. A few weeks afterwards he was discovered in the practice of some excessive austerity, with reference to which, in answer to a letter from his mother, he writes:—"I very sincerely beg your pardon, my dear mother, for the anxiety which I have caused you. I own that I have gone too far, but it was the desire to overcome completely my inclination to greediness which led me to impose various privations on myself, that I might become indifferent about food. . . . So you will pardon me, dear mother, and I will be careful to obey your injunctions."

A foible striven against with so much energy and constancy could not long retain its hold; but his extreme sensitiveness cost him more sustained efforts. This, however, he set himself to control by the acquirement of greater self-command.

After the holidays Paul returned, in October, 1861, better prepared to meet the trials which he had found so painful ; but up to the close of his career at the Lycée, he continued to lead the same solitary life which his timidity and modesty had led him to adopt from the first ; not because his gentle spirit was capable of indifference or disdain, but, with one passing exception, none in the busy throng around him shared his tastes, ambitions, feelings, or desires. Their thoughts were bent on other things. Whenever he could do so unobserved, he would absent himself from the walks and recreations of his comrades, to kneel before the Tabernacle, or say the Rosary, in the college chapel. With regard to these practices, he writes :—" I am told that I shall grow egotistical, if I do not associate more with my companions. I assure you that I love them with all my heart, and would do anything to serve them ; but what good would come of my joining in conversations which I abhor, and which, instead of giving me the peace I find with God, would leave me nothing but emptiness and disgust ?"

Towards the end of his studies, Paul met with one among his schoolfellows, a Protestant, whose tastes corresponded in many respects

with his own ; and whom, with all the energy of his ardent nature, he set himself to convert to the Catholic faith. That his efforts were not, however, successful, we find from a letter dated January 11th 1866, in which he says :—
“My poor N—— has enrolled himself in a company of former scholars of Nancy, fine gentlemen, who announce themselves to be affected by a grand Byronic doubt, and take upon themselves to judge, reject, accept, whatever may be for the moment the fancy of their despicable reason, with regard to the divine and mysterious verities which one ought only to approach with a devout respect. It is they who have lost me my friend. Earthly friendships are like buds, which can only bloom to perfection in the sunshine of the love of God.”

Notwithstanding his reserve, and the comparative solitude in which he kept himself, Paul won the esteem of his comrades, and the sincere affection of those of the masters whose functions gave them frequent opportunities of appreciating his character. “M. le Proviseur,” or “Head Master,” showed him the most affectionate regard, and had him at his house every Sunday, thus enabling him to share, from time to time, in the pleasures he so much missed of

family life. More than once the humble-minded scholar wonders at the interest he inspires, and says, "These gentlemen must indeed be very kind, if they can manage to love, even a little, one who is always melancholy, bashful, and reserved;—for this is my portrait."

But he was alone in this opinion, for no one who approached him could fail to be attracted by a nature so singularly gentle, so feeling, and refined.

During the whole of the time he was at the Lycée, Paul was remarkable for his steady love of work; and by his conscientious and well-directed studies he acquired an amount of varied information by no means commonly to be found in a young man on leaving college.

He was there regarded as one of the best pupils, and was more than once the object of flattering distinctions, which made him happy, less on his own account than for the sake of the pleasure they occasioned to his parents, whose gratification was his greatest ambition.

His ordinary labours were always the best. The anticipation of any special ordeal, perhaps in public, would usually so disturb him, that

he gained "nothing for his compositions but a good headache and a bad place." These partial checks did not hinder his "Year of Rhetoric" from being crowned with success, in November 1863; nor his passing with honour the examination for the "Baccalauréat ès Lettres." He says:—"The subject of the Latin discourse, which was disliked by all the rest, I found most delightful. It was a letter from S. Basil to S. Gregory, inviting him to come and share his retreat in the Thracian Bosphorus, and speaking of his feelings and of his joys. In literature, I had to appreciate the *Cid*; and in Philosophy, to treat upon Liberty. With these admirable subjects I forgot everything—examiners and audience—and troubled myself about nothing, if only I could shed upon the hearts of others any words that should tend to the glory of God and their own good."

In these last lines we see an indication of the thought for the future which already occupied the mind of Paul Seigneret, for it was in the unfavourable soil of the Lycée that first arose the desire for the sacerdotal life, which increased within him until his last hour.

A noticeable feature in this young scholar's

life is the amount of time he gave to prayer. It is his comfort at all hours. Whatever has any sort of importance to him, he recommends at once to God and the Blessed Virgin. His gaze towards heaven has the promptitude, simplicity, and reverent familiarity which are the privilege of innocent souls.

It was his habit to communicate every month, and to prepare himself carefully for some time before the days which to him were such great and happy festivals.

Two characteristics, apparently opposed to each other, are particularly noticeable in Paul. To an effusion of sentiment and a poetry of expression, which might occasion a doubt whether imagination had not too large a share in his piety, he joined a comprehension of the supernatural beauty of the Cross, and a love of suffering, which would be worthy of the most austere inmate of a cloister.

His moral sufferings at the Lycée were not his only trial. His patience was often exercised by illness, against which he invariably struggled to the utmost of his strength. In December 1862, he writes from the infirmary : —“For a long time past I have been unable to get any warmth in bed, but have lain

shivering most of the night. I said nothing, however, *hoping that I might have the happiness to suffer in this way without falling ill.* But a week ago, in addition to the cold, frightful internal pains began at midnight, and lasted until morning—(for I did not wish to disturb anybody)—when I had no strength left, and they carried me to the infirmary.” After this illness he was allowed a separate bedroom, instead of being required to sleep in the common dormitory—a privilege which he considered inestimable.

During the earlier part of the time he was at Nancy, the military career seems rather to have attracted Paul, until, after reflecting on the moral dangers to be encountered in a soldier's life, he writes to his brother:—“Pray to the Holy Virgin for me, that I may give up the thought, if unhappily I should not have strength to keep myself pure and unspotted in this career.” Also, after speaking strongly of the evils which daily shocked him at the Lycée, he adds:—“And yet this is but the image of a regiment in miniature.”

Thus the young Paul found himself, though unawares, much nearer to the seminary than the barrack. He delighted in the sacred cere-

monies of the Catholic faith; and was often heard to speak in raptures of the grand services at the Abbey of Solesmes, as, later on, of the magnificent solemnities of S. Sulpice; but it was not until the commencement of his third year at Nancy that he writes to his father, from whom he had no secrets, of his new aspirations.

He begins:—"I am going to write to you, my dear father, the most serious and important letter that I have ever written in my life. . . . For three years, without any one knowing it, I have felt an ever-increasing desire to be a priest. At first I dared not speak of it, feeling that every one would say to me, 'You, so weak in mind and character; you, so unworthy, so unsteadfast, in the love of God; you would be a priest!' But the idea has never left me, and it is in vain that I have wished to put it aside; it follows me everywhere, at all hours, day and night. I would fain dedicate myself to God, who is so good, who loves us so much, and who died for us, and who receives so much contempt from His creatures. But then a cry escapes my heart: 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou should'st enter into my house, nor even that Thou

should'st look upon me; but say the word only, and my soul shall be healed, my stains effaced, and I shall be purified, and made worthy to be Thy servant.' "

Without making any opposition to a vocation which gave so much promise of reality, Paul's father advised him to take time for mature consideration, adding that silence was to be recommended for the present, as most agreeable to God,—a rule of conduct which was accepted with grateful submission by this most docile of sons.

From this time it is only in letters addressed to his father that he makes any allusion to his vocation for the ecclesiastical life, but to him, whom he calls "the mirror of his heart," he often recalls these thoughts upon which he delights to dwell.

In answer to certain objections, he writes, "I know, my dear father, perhaps more than you are aware, of the dark side of the sacerdotal state, and of the sufferings which are in store for the priest. . . . I can perceive daily that I shall have to submit to the contempt or indifference of many persons, to whom the priest is a useless man. . . . I have read the Abbé Bautain's book, '*La Belle Saison à la*

Campagne,' and all that he says about the life of a curé. Well, but if one is a true priest, the more one has of suffering, the more also of joy. Perhaps I shall be poor and in necessity: here, then, is another happiness, for what is a greater joy than to deprive one's self of everything in order to give the more to others?"

And again:—"I must own that it is with a secret pleasure that I perceive myself to be not at all made to suit the world. To attach me here, I must have perfect creatures, whom I should, nevertheless, injure, by letting them come in contact with my imperfect and earthly nature. It is GOD alone, whom one can thus love without doing Him injury, because He is above us in all His perfections; He sheds upon us His graces, without our baseness and impurities having any power to sully His glory."

His correspondence during this last year at the Lycée is very remarkable. He had developed into a young man, and his mind expanded like a flower beneath the early sunshine. Literary studies increasingly captivated his fine understanding. He worked with indefatigable ardour, and frequently profited

by his exceptional position to prolong his labours far into the night.

He was very fond of flowers, and, in one of his letters, mentions having visited, with a friend, some conservatories at Nancy. After describing their riches, he continues, "We chose two simple primroses, sweet and modest little flowers, and charming from their delicate perfume. On our way home, we met a poor old man, shivering with cold, and gave him all the money we had left. We were well rewarded. The poor man was so touched that his eyes filled with tears. As he held our flowers while we took out our purses, he admired and caressed them so much that they seemed to us more beautiful. I have my primrose now in my room, and take such pleasure every evening in looking at it, watering it, watching its developments, contemplating this charming little creature, which seems to smile at me and love me."

The beauties of nature and the love of God so filled Paul's heart, that amusements to which youths of his age were accustomed to enter into with eagerness, appeared to him poor and insipid.

"We all went to the circus," he writes one

day, "to see always the same things, to applaud without shame, and to fill ourselves with beer and lemonade. It must be confessed that this is not very interesting. There is something so sad in seeing these young men, full of strength, expose for a little money their health and life; or these poor girls who are made a prey to the gaze and coarse remarks of so many people, and whom one sees in the arena, rosy, smiling, and intoxicated with the applauses which are usually lavished upon the one who puts herself into the most unseemly attitudes, and yet whom I have seen, on entering, pale, weary, and with an expression of habitual sadness which has struck me."

On the Shrove Tuesday of 1864, when there were theatricals, songs, dances, and other noisy diversions which had little attraction for Paul, he spent the whole day with a gentleman who was ill and in great suffering, doing everything in his power to cheer and enliven him. "Thus," he writes, "Shrove Tuesday has been a happy day for me, and the clamours which I heard from time to time outside, made me enjoy my happiness so much the more.

"This morning a new joy. It is Ash Wednesday. Lent has begun: this beautiful

time for repentance and for striving to purify one's self in the sight of GOD,—when one ponders these impressive words, ‘Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return.’ Ah! where is the time, when, at Angers, we took part in the solemnities of Lent? Here there is nothing of all these enjoyments; no singing, no psalms, no Retreat, no Benediction,—with the lights gilding the clouds of incense,—no Tenebræ; but always the same noisy, heedless barrack, marching to the sound of the drum. Well! it is the last year!”

The time arrived at last when Paul was to end his sojourn at the Lycée, which he left in July 1864. Though nearly nineteen years of age, his appearance was extremely youthful. His family desired a longer time of probation before allowing him to take any step towards the life to which he aspired, fearing lest his ardent spirit might not sufficiently realize its difficulties.

He submitted unhesitatingly to so reasonable a requirement, and it was arranged that he should spend this period in fulfilling the office of tutor to the young children of M. le Marquis du Dresnay, in Brittany, to whom

he had been recommended by some mutual friends.

"And then," he writes, "this will be but for a year; two at most: and after that I shall be free to give up my life to Him who has ever been my life, my happiness, my hope, my joy."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHATEAU DU DRENEUC.

OWARDS the end of September 1864, Paul Seigneret arrived at the Château du Dréneuc in the parish of Fégréac, two leagues from Redon.

He set himself to the work confided to him, with his accustomed energy, and regarded it as a fitting prelude to the priestly life to which he so earnestly looked forward.

Notwithstanding his youthful appearance, he speedily secured the respect and esteem of all the inmates of the château, by the delicacy and discretion with which he conducted himself in his various relations, and the fidelity with which he fulfilled his duties.

While his never-failing gentleness did not exclude the amount of firmness necessary to the well-being of his pupils, his kindness of heart put him at the service, or rather at the mercy, of all around him. His already insufficient hours of sleep were shortened that he might find time to give instruction to several of the servants of the household.

The poor soon found out his ready charity. "My money runs rather quickly through my hands," he writes, shortly after his arrival, "thanks to these poor dear people, whom I see in misery and want. It gives so much pleasure to them to receive a little money, and as much to me to give it; hence I generally return to the Château with some fresh happiness from my little expeditions."

Thus everybody became attached to "*Monsieur Paul*." Madame la Marquise du Dresnay, who had constant opportunities of observing him, regarded as a special blessing from heaven the presence of one who, she said, was like "an angel in the house," and of whom she spoke with maternal affection as "Our little Saint Aloysius de Gonzaga."

But Paul had his trials. Besides that of continued separation from his family, he felt

very sensibly the pressure of the new kind of life upon which he had entered, which involved the abandonment of the studies so dear to him, and which absorbed his time in functions requiring his intellect to stoop instead of rise. When he found that two years at least of this existence were in store for him, he writes, "A heavy cross has been laid upon me, because there I must crucify my aspirations, my tastes, my will. Let me give thanks to God: for what matters it, O my God, of what wood my cross is made? *O mea bone Jesu! Jesu dulcissime!*—Who hast suffered so much for me, what would I not suffer for the love of Thee? Thus I desire to stretch myself all my length upon the cross Thou sendest me."

These were no vain words, without corresponding acts. Paul led a very mortified life. On one occasion, Madame du Dresnay thought it her duty to check, if possible, the excessive austerities of her "little anchorite," who, after reading the Lives of the Saints, and of the Curé d'Ars, was imposing privations upon himself which might seriously affect his health.

Finding that his uncle, the Abbé Seigneret,

had been informed of his practices, he writes, "I see forming at Angers a dark cloud of sermons and gentle reproaches, ready to burst upon me . . . truly this is too much solicitude for *Messer Gaster* . . . besides, I do nothing deserving either of attention or reproof, so there is no occasion to be uneasy on my account."

One morning the servant who arranged his room, found, on the bed, an object so perplexing that, before touching it, he went to mention his discovery to Madame du Dresnay.

On finding it to be a hair shirt, she ordered the room to be left as it was, until after the return of its occupant, who was thus spared the knowledge that his secret had been discovered.

This same hair shirt gave rise to one of the most charming letters he ever wrote. It is dated November the 5th, 1865, and is as follows:—

"MY VERY DEAR FATHER,

"A regret which troubles me, and also the kindness of your last letter, decide me to make a request, about which I have long hesitated. And first, may I tell you a story

which I read when a child, and which struck me very much ?

“ ‘ There was once a prince, who, during his earliest years, was full of malice and of every fault, committing all the naughtinesses possible to a child. However, reflection came to him at last, and with it a desire to correct himself, and to compensate his parents for all the trouble he had caused them. In this praiseworthy state of mind, he went humbly to ask advice of his governess, who was a fairy. She gave him a ring, which pricked his finger every time he was about to do or to think anything wrong, and these warnings in time produced such an effect, that from being “ Prince Scapegrace,” he became “ Prince Charming.” ’ ”

“ I also, without being a prince, am full of sin and imperfection. As a child, how often have I wished for this enchanted ring to help me to correct myself ! As a young man, a bright thought, doubtless from my good angel, came to me, which realizes this fable of the ring.

“ My dear father, I have long hesitated to unveil to you this secret, but your last letter has broken down the last obstacle to my de-

sire to do so. Besides, when it is once confided to your fatherly heart, you will keep it there safely, and speak of it to none.

“There are people of the world who, at the very name of that of which I speak, would exclaim against it as a piece of antiquity only fit for the penitents of the middle ages; there are some also who would admire and wonder at it, when really it is the simplest thing imaginable!

“Last year, after earnest entreaties, my confessor consented to procure me a little instrument, which scarcely sees the day, except in monasteries—a hair shirt. This was my companion and monitor, which checked me when wrong actions, words, or thoughts, threatened to offend the Master of my heart. It was, in fact, one of my best friends. Alas! I most unwisely left it off during the vacation, under pretext of the heat, and hid it carefully away. In packing my trunk, the numberless preoccupations of departure made me forget it, but during the night, as by a beautiful moonlight, we were rolling on our way towards Paris, my unfortunate friend suddenly came to my mind. If you only knew how much I miss it, this little continual nothing, which unceas-

ingly warned me to keep the thought of God in my heart !

"*You*, my dear father, will understand that my using it is not the effect of a foolish presumption which would lead me to try and ape the saint ; but because I am a sinner, the prey of a thousand faults and defects, against which I strive as well as I can."

The world erroneously supposes the practice of corporal mortification to have the effect of narrowing the views and chilling the heart. To this prejudice, the life of Paul Seigneret is an emphatic contradiction. "If one is mortified," he used to say, "one only flies the better, and loves the more purely." His correspondence all through these two years is a striking testimony to the truth of these words ; especially his home letters, which are more touchingly full of overflowing affection than any others.

In August, 1866, his father writes of him :—
"Paul has an innocence and simplicity of mind, adorned with thoughts and feelings, which fit him well for a convent. . . . I think he would do well to shut himself up in a cloister. The world, which pushes rudely

against everything it does not understand, would be too rough for him."

That Paul was of the same opinion with regard to his unfitness for ordinary life, the following account which he gives of himself will show.

The solitude of the Château du Dréneuc was occasionally enlivened by the presence of numerous and distinguished guests, and the young tutor had opportunities of mixing in that society which makes the charm of fashionable life. He fully appreciated this advantage, and admired, as much as any one, a great name worthily borne; but at the same time he felt that he was called to belong to a society more noble still. "For some time past," he writes gaily, "there have been visitors at the château. One day after dinner, as the company rose to return to the drawing-room, Madame de —, finding herself without a cavalier, M. du Dresnay invited me to offer her my arm. In vain I stammered out some excuse about being too short; unhappily I was taller than the lady, and saw that I should have to be victimized. On this occasion, therefore, you might have beheld your son figuring as a gosling. Red to the ears, and unable to

get out of the difficulty, I trembled lest I should tread on the foot, or incommode the shoulder of my lady. At last some one charitably came to the rescue, and, my punishment over, I did not dare to breathe a word before making good my retreat from the drawing-room. So you see what a figure I should make in the world!"

By degrees his own aspirations to the ecclesiastical state tended rather to the cloister than the seminary, as he considered himself to be personally unfitted for the active life of a priest, although constantly desiring to devote himself entirely to God in a life of mortification and prayer, and vowed a Novena of pilgrimages to the "Field of the Martyrs," near Angers, in the hope of obtaining enlightenment as to his vocation.

This field, which is about a mile and a half from Angers, was the scene of fearful massacres under the Reign of Terror, when the representatives of the people attempted to drown the "fanaticism" of La Vendée in blood. In the chapel which has been erected on the place of the executions, innumerable ex-votos testify to the favours there received.

A few days of vacation, which, shortly after-

wards, Paul spent at Angers, gave him the opportunity of fulfilling his vow.

Every morning at daybreak he set out from "Le Petit Séminaire" of Mongazon, and at the close of the Novena felt a greater attraction than ever to the monastic life.

La Trappe was the chief object of his desires; but on its being represented that his constitution was utterly unequal to cope with the rigorous asceticism practised by the Order, he turned his thoughts to the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes. A visit which he paid to this retreat of piety and learning increased his wish to be received among its inmates.

Upon learning the new form which his aspirations had taken, his father judged it advisable to prolong his time of probation; but from this moment the expectation of the day when he should be permitted to consecrate himself to God was ever present with him, filling his thoughts and sustaining his courage.

He writes on one occasion from a château in Poitou, in which, together with the family du Dresnay, he was staying:—"Only a few months more in which to share the life of the world, and to undergo the vain distractions, which are so much deducted from the love of

God. They have given me here a superb chamber; mahogany and marble, silk and velvet abound. All this luxury stifles and oppresses me. Only a few months more to share the table of the rich, and to sleep in a bed, the splendour of which dazzles me. I see in perspective my cell and little couch, my books and crucifix. *There* are no distractions; none of these kind but importunate attentions. *There* one is alone with God: God always, and everywhere."

On the approach of Christmas Day, he writes:—"On Sunday and Monday what delights await me! I shall then take leave of the château and my little pupils, to spend the time in the Church of Fégréac. As the knights of old watched by their arms all night, so shall I pass my Christmas eve in praying in the church, dim and silent, until the hour when this good and religious Breton population comes thronging into the illuminated aisles."

And afterwards he continues:—"This was indeed a night of joy. Choirs of children, alternating with the voices of the men, sang carols, of which the sweet and simple melody was exquisitely touching. One saw these men, these women, all this devout multitude, of

which the church could scarcely contain the numbers, pressing without disorder towards the altar to receive Holy Communion.

"This lasted from eleven o'clock until three, and oh! how quickly have these happy moments flown, to which I had so long looked forward! They sparkle and vanish like the motes that dance in the sunbeam; but I carried with me, in my heart, the Source of all happiness and joy."

During the sojourn of the du Dresnay family at the Château of La Taillée, at some distance from Niort, Paul Seigneret frequently repaired thither on the Saturday evening, in order that he might pass the Sunday where he was unknown, and where his devotion could have free play. The room he occupied was near the Church of Nôtre Dame, but it was known that on these nights he never went to bed; and at daybreak, when the doors of the church were opened, he was already kneeling in the porch.

A letter to his father, dated June 29th, 1865, shows how these hours were spent. "So much happiness," he writes, "drives sleep away, and all night long, by the open window, I hear the wind sigh through the empty streets, and the



night-birds cry from the spire of Nôtre Dame, which rises darkly into the sky. Every stroke of the bell thrills through me, as it tells me of the approach of the longed-for hour of Sunday morning. . . .

“At three o'clock the dawn begins to brighten. Oh, beautiful clouds of gold! Oh, majestic globe of fire, emerging from the dimness of the horizon! how eloquent you are of Him who has made you so magnificent!

“By this time the inhabitants, their faces happy with a festal brightness, are busily occupied in adorning the way by which the Blessed Sacrament is to pass. They lay carpets along the streets, and scatter them with flowers, while the houses are gay with wreaths and garlands. Amid the odour of flowers and incense, the joyous harmony of the bells, and in the splendour of the morning sunshine, approaches this beautiful procession. There are young girls clad in white, and veiled, singing hymns to the Queen of Virgins, and children, with a thousand little banners floating in the air. The crosses and the standards are lowered and raised again, as they pass beneath the arches of green. Lastly, advances the God of Majesty and Love.

“At each of the ‘reposoirs’* the people had erected in the streets, the band of the Lancers filled the air with jubilant strains of martial music, to do honour to the King of kings, after which, in silence, the Benediction was given to the kneeling multitudes.

“Oh, God! who art so full of love to us, grant that we may have but one aim—Thy glory; but one desire—Thy love, and eternal contemplation!”

A few weeks later on, a slight cloud unexpectedly arose, which somewhat overshadowed the happy *alone-ness* in which he had revelled on these festival days.

“About half-past eight in the evening,” he writes, “I was retiring to take my dinner during a solitary walk, without fear of being seen. At these happy times, hunger as well as sleep seems to forsake me, and I find a small roll quite sufficient for a repast; but behold Monsieur de M——, an old officer, and a friend of the family, suddenly accosts me, and while I feel myself turning crimson from confusion, at not being able to hide my halfpenny loaf, he scolds me vigorously for not taking my

* Altars in the open air, where the Blessed Sacrament “rests” at intervals in the course of a procession.

meals at his house, and insists on my promising henceforward to do so. I am truly grateful for his kindness; but my days will have lost their charm, for I shall no longer be alone with God."

In the midst of the delight he took in the practices of religion, Paul felt the need of a more special direction than he had as yet enjoyed, with reference to the sacerdotal life. In reading "*Népotien, or the Disciple of the Sanctuary*," he discovered that many of his ideas respecting the priesthood were too vague and poetic, "*à la Lamartine*," and that he required a practical and definite training for the sacred office in more points than he had anticipated.

It was naturally at Solesmes, where he was already known, and to which he felt a strong attraction, that Paul wished to make trial of his vocation. Thither he went, therefore, in Holy Week, 1866, having, for three months previously, prepared himself for the time which he regarded as one of the greatest epochs in his life, and for the general confession with which he intended to commence his Retreat.

He reproached himself severely for the

smallest deficiencies in fervour and courage, accusing himself of weakness and cowardice, which, while looking forward to make the greatest sacrifices, finds heaviness in the sacrifice of daily life," and of a "contradictory spirit, which consumes itself in desires, instead of profiting by the present." And yet, at the same time, in the depths of his heart, there was a spring of never-failing hope and joy.

He was received at Solesmes with the most paternal kindness, and after his Retreat returned to Dréneuc, radiant with happiness, and more than ever confirmed in his desire to give himself wholly to God.

This thought forms, as it were, the *refrain* of all his letters from this period, which, nevertheless, glow more than ever with the warm and tender affection which filled his heart towards every member of his beloved home-circle. "And for you, my poor little sister, my darling of eleven years old," he writes, "I feel especially,—you, who always fly to me so jealously, so lovingly. Alas! we shall be far from each other then; but yet I feel that when the first grief is over, I shall, instead of giving up all you beloved ones at home, only love you with a stronger and purer

love than ever in the shade of the cloister."

Before quitting the Du Dresnay family, Paul accompanied them on a little expedition in Brittany, which interested him greatly. During his sojourn at Dréneuc, he had often admired the simple manners of the people, and, above all, their antique faith, "firmly rooted as the oaks which overspread this land of granite," this "classic home of honour and fidelity."

Mingled in a crowd of Breton peasants, he joined in a pilgrimage which is made annually, on the Feast of the Holy Angels, to a little chapel not far from Dréneuc, and writes of it as follows:—"This chapel, poor as it is, makes an impression upon one. It is four white-washed walls, with a roof showing the bare rafters like a barn, and which has only of late years enjoyed the luxury of slates. But a great and generous association is attached to this little chapel, which was built under the Reign of Terror.

"When the '*Blues*' were masters of Fégréac, and at the very time when, in this market-place, in front of the church, they were shooting nobles and peasants, a priest

named Orian, whose family is still held in great veneration in the country, devoted himself for his parishioners, and through the whole time of the Revolution, contrived, by his incessant activity, and the evident protection of God, to baffle the pursuit of the enemy, and to afford the inhabitants all the ordinances of religion.

"It was he who, with the assistance of his faithful flock, built this chapel, which was only distinguished from the cottages around it by the cross cut in the granite over the door.

"Here I was present at Holy Mass. It was a living picture: an exact representation of the scenes of seventy years ago. On one side were the women, reciting the rosary, on the other, the men, grave and muscular, in their dark costumes, bent towards the ground in an attitude of the greatest recollectedness.

"We were all kneeling on the bare earth. No sound was to be heard but the voice of the priest, and the ringing of the bell, which told that our LORD was present once more in this lowly chapel, amid the sons of the brave forefathers, full of faith and generous self-devotion, who are now, I trust, reaping the reward of all their sufferings.

"The ceremony terminated by the benediction of the seed-corn which was about to be sown.

"How can people desire that the Breton people, with such scenes and such remembrances, should unnationalize themselves in the flood of ordinary Frenchmen?"

During some days that Paul spent at the Château du Tromeur, near the village of Plouvorn, in Finisterre, he was much impressed by the melancholy charm which reigns in this part of the country, and by its severe aspect of rocky sterility, which is partly attributable to the strong sea-winds to which this region is exposed.

From hence he writes, "I was present, on the Eve of Saint Anne, at the most picturesque scene that I ever beheld.

"When night came on, the bell of the chapel summoned the people to a sort of terrace, where it is customary to burn, annually, on this night, an enormous bonfire.

"About a hundred peasants, standing with their arms crossed, in the proud and grave attitude which is habitual with the Armoricans, assisted at this singular rejoicing, in profound silence, their faces illumined by the blazing

pile. When the crackling of the flames had subsided, and a red heap of glowing embers was all that remained of the fire, a tall young man advanced from the circle of spectators, and in a powerful voice slowly intoned a Breton 'Sône,' or plaint, of an indescribable melancholy. As he continued singing the fire died out, and the moon rose in splendour on this dream-like scene.

"In this song I seemed to hear the breathing forth of the spirit of sombre reverie which dwells in this strong old Brittany; a thoughtful sadness, which reveals the aspirations after higher regions than those of earth . . . for do we not all, oh God, languish and sigh and wait, with a solemn and mysterious waiting? And this expectancy seemed to express itself in the plaintive melody of this song."

On returning from this journey, Paul passed a few more days at the Château du Dréneuc. When the time came for his departure, it was without emotion that he left a place where he had spent so many peaceful days.

Madame du Dresnay wrote of him, "He has passed like an angel among us: every one of his steps has been a good action, and every word he has spoken has always been to us a

source of either edification or pleasure," adding, "I do not believe that the dear youth has committed a single sin during the whole time that he has been with us, unless, indeed, that of going away."

During his journey from Angers to Niort, he went from the little town of Airvault, in Poitou, on a pilgrimage to St. Loup, the birth-place of the young martyr Théophane Venard, Priest of the Foreign Mission, who, in 1860, suffered in China for the Faith, and whose last letter to his parents, which was written immediately before his martyrdom, is affixed to one of the pillars in the church.

About this time a curious incident took place in the history of Paul's vocation.

His longing for the religious life at Solesmes had continued to increase, and his happiness in the anticipation of it was so great that he was suddenly seized with the idea that he should find himself too happy there, and that he ought to sacrifice this happiness to God by seeking admission into the far sterner rule of La Trappe.

Before venturing, however, to name this new thought to his parents, he wrote for advice on the subject to the Rev. Father Dom Cou-

turier, who had been his confessor during his retreat at Solesmes.

The answer was, that his excessive ardour deceived him, and that the step he contemplated as a means of perfection would, to such a temperament as his, be not only a terrible trial, but a real danger.

It was also urged that his health was not at all equal to the extreme asceticism of La Trappe. His chest was weak, and there were indications of an affection of the heart.

He strove, with no small energy and determination, to gain his point, and in drawing a comparison between the two kinds of life which lay before him, he said, "In the one I should be as happy as a bird of paradise; in the other it would be given me to follow truly, in pain and sacrifice, the royal road of the Cross which Jesus trod for me."

It was at last agreed that a sort of compromise should be made between his ardent eagerness and the indulgent wisdom of his guides, who consented that he should make the attempt, and if it should fail, as they anticipated it would, he was assured of finding the same welcome as ever at Solesmes.

When Paul presented himself at the Monas-

THE CHATEAU DU DRENEUC.

tery of La Trappe, at Bellefontaine in Anjou, it was with considerable difficulty that he obtained admittance at all, even on trial, on account of his delicate appearance. In fact, after three weeks his strength was exhausted, and he was obliged to avow his inability and acknowledge his mistake.

It now became necessary for him to spend some time at home with his family in order to recover.

CHAPTER III.

THE ABBEY OF SOLESMES.

IT was in November, 1866, that Paul Seigneret returned to his parents at Epinal, where he remained until Easter in the following year, his health requiring great and continued care.

This delay was felt by his friends at Solesmes to be in all respects advisable, as it gave time to moderate the ardour, which, notwithstanding its evident sincerity, inspired some apprehension.

With his habitual activity, Paul profited by this time of leisure to resume his habits of

study, which, for two years, had been interrupted. In January, 1867, he had read through the twenty volumes of Thiers' "*Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*;" and for the three months he was yet to pass at Epinal, he had traced for himself a programme which comprehended, besides Latin authors, Homer, several tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus, and a review of the principles of philosophy studied at the Lycée—and all this that he might not arrive "all new" at Solesmes.

At the same time he allowed himself the free enjoyment of all the happiness of home-life, which his loving heart so keenly appreciated. The thought of the approaching separation came often across him "like the thrust of a javelin," but he calmly faced the sacrifice which, by anticipation, he realised.

It was about this period, that a sudden and unexpected form of self-devotion presented itself so forcibly before Paul's mind, as to threaten an entire change in his plans.

In April, 1867, rumours of impending war were producing a vast amount of patriotic agitation throughout France. His lively imagination already pictured to itself an invasion of his country, and his duty seemed to him

equally simple and imperious to enrol himself, if need be, among her defenders.

He wrote to the Reverend Father, Prior of Solesmes, "If I am accused of folly or bravado because, with my feeble arm and woman's face, I dream of the hard life of a soldier, I would say that it seems to me the most sacred of duties, as soon as the frontiers are threatened, to fly, weak or strong, to their defence, and to employ at least the little strength I have received from God in protesting by my presence and my blood against the odious violation of the rights of my country.

"I say all this," he adds, "and yet I am coming to you, the counsels of my father agreeing with those of the Most Reverend Father Abbot; but, so long as I am not bound to the monastery by the ties of religion, if France, overwhelmed, should require the devotion of even her feeblest children, and if I might be of service to my parents, would you refuse me the exercise of my duties as citizen and son?"

This warlike fashion of beginning his noviciate, while it may have called forth a smile from the Fathers of Solesmes, did not augur ill for the future of the postulant to whom

self-sacrifice was so easy, and, as it were, a matter of course.

On the 16th of April, 1867, Paul Seigneret bade adieu to his home, and entered the Abbey of Solesmes, where he found the reality of the religious life far to surpass his most sanguine expectations; and on the 19th of May he was received into the number of the postulants.

In a letter written at this time to his parents he says, "How can I thank you sufficiently for the touching kindness you have shown in sending me at this solemn time all that I most desired at your hands—namely, your entire approbation and your blessing? I have read this precious letter again and again, and have laid it where I lay all the letters I receive from you, at the foot of the crucifix you gave me."

The young novice brought to the practice of the religious life a disposition and good will that were truly admirable. The Reverend Father Dom Couturier writes of him, "The more painful was the obedience required, the more eagerly he embraced it, receiving everything with a contentment and willingness that made him the delight of his superiors and his brethren. He always sought those services which were least agreeable, and loved to take

upon himself the burdens of others: constantly forgetful of himself, and thoughtful for every one beside.

The noviciate at Solesmes not only developed the excellent qualities of his disposition, but had also a happy influence on the mind of Paul Seigneret, which, though rich and cultivated in regard to secular knowledge, was as yet a stranger to the sciences which strengthen the inner life of a religious or a priest. His sojourn at Solesmes taught him to mistrust many of his previous ideas, which he modified, with perfect candour and loyalty, as soon as he had once become convinced that they were erroneous.

He threw himself with ardour into the course of study marked out for him. The Psalms, the Holy Gospels, and the Epistles of St. Paul were his favourite study, and next to these, Ecclesiastical History.

The daily chanting of the Divine Office in choir was also a constant delight.

When he had been rather more than two years at Solesmes his former aspirations for the priesthood returned with greater strength than before. It was with regret that he had ever laid them aside, under the idea that his

insignificant appearance would unfit him from doing the good he desired, and that it was unsuitable to the dignity of the Office ; but now that this obstacle no longer existed, he felt himself more strongly attracted than ever to the active ministry of the sacerdotal life.

It was not without a long and painful struggle that he came to the resolution to leave a place where he had found so much solid happiness, and where he had received spiritual benefits so many and so great.

He turned his thoughts towards St. Sulpice, having a secret attraction for Paris, where he saw a prospect of abundant work.

The idea was suggested to him of returning for a while to secular life ; but he utterly repelled it, and desired to enter as soon as possible the house belonging to St. Sulpice at Issy.

In acceding to his desire for the active rather than the contemplative life, his superiors at the Abbey did not then see so clearly as afterwards the Will of God in regard to Paul, and they wondered at the energy with which he pursued his present aim.

"Nothing," writes the Reverend Father Dom Couturier, "could hold him back, neither the

tears of the Brethren, whom he loved as if they had been members of his own family, nor the paternal affection of the Most Reverend Father Abbot. He passed through all obstacles, in spite of the many tears they cost him, leaving us astonished at a strength of resolution, the meaning of which we could not comprehend."

Paul left Solesmes on the 30th of June, 1868, and on reaching Paris, felt amazed himself at the thought of what he had dared to do, wondering how he had torn himself away from the place which had become so dear to him.

He arrived at Issy in his monastic habit, when the greater part of the seminarists were taking their departure for the vacation, and remained, therefore, almost alone, peacefully working in preparation for the time when they should re-assemble. After a few weeks, however, he was attacked by fever, which necessitated a period of repose at home. He, therefore, awaited at Epinal the close of the vacation in October, 1868.

CHAPTER IV.

SAINT SULPICE.

HE Seminary of Issy was a place eminently fitted to soften the regret of the young novice for his beloved Abbey of Solesmes.

This venerable habitation, with its modest cells, its various oratories, its fine old trees, has a peculiar charm, well-known to those who have passed there the preparatory years of their sacerdotal life. An atmosphere of fervent piety and fraternal charity pervades this place, where many generations of holy priests have been trained for their sacred labours, under the shadow of the venerated Sanctuary of Our Lady of Loretto, lately destroyed by the savage fury of the Commune, but which the sons of St. Sulpice are raising in renewed beauty from its ruins.

From increased mistrust of himself, Paul Seigneret was at first somewhat anxious and thoughtful about his future.

“If this new attempt should fail,” he writes, “what would become of me, with the ever-increasing desire and longing I have to give my

life for GOD ? I would go to the Foreign Missions, and should still be too happy ; but I do not conceal from you that I should then sacrifice many of my dreams. With my temperament and inclinations, I fear I should find myself completely out of place among the Chinese: *and yet my life must be for God.*"

These apprehensions troubled him for a time, but after two months of the peaceful, laborious, and fortifying life at the seminary, his courage and confidence returned. He felt at rest in this atmosphere of piety and study, and speedily became an object of interest to those around him. The more intimately he was known, the more evident was the reality of his vocation to the priesthood. Duty, and the Will of GOD, were always the first thought and care of Paul Seigneret. No seminarist was more faithful to the smallest details of the rules, or more simple and humble in his observance of them. He was one of those who, in a community, require to be closely looked after, in order that they should not overstep the limits of their strength. He would obey simply and at once a distinct counsel or command, but would eagerly return to the common rule as soon as he thought he had sufficiently

accomplished that which had been ordered. Being less known on his entrance into the seminary, and less betrayed at first by failure of strength, he contrived to pass the winter without a fire, and to fast through the whole of Lent.

The love of ecclesiastical study which he had learned at Solesmes continued in full vigour at Issy. He felt that, in these days more than ever, there is need for the priest to honour his sacred office by sound and cultivated learning.

The numerous MSS., to which he consigned the result of his studies, testify to an accuracy of mind and an activity of habit truly astonishing. Saturday, the 22nd of May, was fixed upon as the day on which he was to receive the tonsure. It was a day of great happiness to Paul; but almost immediately afterwards he was obliged, by order of the physicians, to leave the seminary without delay, his laborious studies, together with the keen emotions relative to this event, having been too much for him. The state of his health betrayed itself by frequent faintings, and with sorrow and regret he found himself compelled to depart.

At the same time, he troubled himself little about this over-fatigue, thinking it would soon

pass away, and set out with further projects of study for the time he should have to remain at home.

In fact, after a few days of repose, he was able to resume, in moderation, the labours he felt to be so necessary a preparation for his future career.

"I wish you could see," he writes, "the loving care and kindness with which I am surrounded. The thought of the affection I have quitted, and that to which I have returned, is sadness by the side of joy; everything turning itself to love, for the love of God, Who is so beautiful in the reflections of His goodness. The more I see of men and of life, the more I comprehend the priceless happiness GOD has granted me in calling me to His service. GOD Himself, the Infinite, gives Himself to me, in order that I may give Him to others."

About this time, a sort of large register, in two folio volumes, was given to Paul, in which he could note down any passages selected from his course of reading. "They will last me my life!" he exclaimed, on receiving them. The folios were very large, and his life, alas! was to be very short, and yet he filled them almost

entirely, besides adding a third to the other two. In looking over these books, in which he had amassed his treasures, one asks, with wonder, how, with his ordinary studies, which he never neglected, he could, in less than two years, accomplish this labour. Everything is distributed in order, with a table of contents, not completed, and written in a clear and firm hand. Plato, S. Augustine, and Bossuet, are the names which recur the most frequently. But texts from the Bible, the Book he best loved, and upon which he had meditated most, fill the greatest number of the long columns, on one of the last pages of which it was touching to find this short quotation from S. Ignatius Martyr, "*To be in love with Death.*"

In October, Paul Seigneret returned to the Seminary of S. Sulpice, in Paris. Although his health had benefited by the time he had spent at home, a dull and unceasing pain at the heart continued, of which he did not, however, think seriously. "I have full confidence in the future," he said, "because, without it, my life would be inexplicable and absurd." At the same time, a presentiment, not without sadness, would, at times, force itself upon him,

which, nevertheless, lost itself in an act of acquiescence to the Will of GOD.

He writes:—"I must, before all things, make the most of the present, without reckoning upon an uncertain future, and take for my own the old device, '*Fais ce que tu dois, advienne que pourra*'—Do what you ought, happen what may."

At Paris, as at Issy, the same forgetfulness of self, and thoughtful charity for others, gave to his society a peculiar charm. To serve the Church, to save souls, to love GOD without measure, were the aims which daily and increasingly filled the heart of the young seminary, giving a character of great simplicity to all his words and actions. He embraced, with fervour, the practices of the seminary, loved the devotions which are there held in particular honour, most especially those to our LORD, in the Holy Sacrament, and to our Blessed Lady, and followed assiduously the course of study prescribed. Moreover, those who knew him most intimately were happy in remarking the firm and resolute constancy with which he pursued the path he had chosen, and that his enthusiasm was no exaggeration of the true and profound conviction

of his heart. His faith in the power of gentleness over the minds of men led him to adopt as his rule of conduct the words addressed by the Sovereign Pontiff to the Abbé Henri Perreyve:—"Strike errors courageously, but have the heart of a mother towards the erring."

Weeks and months of his seminary life passed rapidly away, and were happily and fruitfully employed; but, before the month of May, his health again gave way, and the pain at the heart became, at times, violent. He resisted as long as possible, but was obliged to yield at last, and, with a sorrowful heart, and tears in his eyes, own that he must again leave S. Sulpice. He set out for Sous-le-Saulnier, where his father, having been made Inspector of the Academy of the Jura, had gone to reside.

The physicians who were consulted on Paul's case considered it a grave one, and insisted on the necessity of a year's repose at home, together with the abandonment, for that period, of all serious and fatiguing study.

He made every effort to obtain a softening of the latter part of this sentence, about which also he wrote to beg for his uncle's interces-

sion. Finding all his entreaties and representations to be, however, in vain, he resolved to obey the hard injunction, lest he should be opposing the Will of GOD in refusing to make this sacrifice.

In one of his private note-books he wrote, about this time, "Is there, then, for me no future in which to give myself, even for a little time, those who are so dear to GOD? The salvation of one single soul would far more than recompense me for the efforts of my whole life. . . . There are but two things in this world worth doing—to love GOD, and to make Him to be loved by others. If he denies me the second, I shall, at least, thank Him eternally for having shown me the sweetness of the first. Help me, O my GOD, to give up all my desires to Thee; only suffer me to pray that I may rather die than live a useless life."

He found great consolation, also, in contemplating the divine and imperishable work of the Catholic priesthood, so necessary to the world, and, in the hand of GOD, so independent of this or that individual. With his lofty thoughts and noble desires, he knew how to offer to GOD the little daily sacrifices which are impossible to those whose virtue has no

depth or solidity. Suffering as he was, he marked out for himself a life of prayer and meditation as complete as it could have been in his beloved cell at S. Sulpice.

In a letter to his director, dated June 13th, 1870, he says:—"In the morning I am usually at the church from five o'clock until seven, for my best nights allow me about four hours of sleep, and the doctor himself has agreed that, during this fine weather, I may suffer less out of bed. Besides, in the old choir of the church, whither the joys of so many past generations seem to crowd upon me together with my own, I feel no fatigue, dividing my time between the Holy Mass, and prayer, or meditating on the designs of God for our souls, of which the inexhaustible thoughts make one thrill with more happiness than any of the splendours of this world.

"After this, my day's occupation consists of an hour's reading of the Holy Scriptures, a sermon of Bourdaloue, the study of Church History, reciting the office of the Holy Virgin, and glancing through the daily journals.

"From five to six in the evening I spend in the church, and, before bed-time, after thinking over my day, I read, according to an old

habit of mine, a chapter of the 'Imitation,' a book which I never open without fresh delight."

While the days were passing thus peacefully and profitably at home, and in frequent correspondence with many at S. Sulpice with whom he had formed a warm friendship. Events of the gravest nature once more arose to give another current to his thoughts, and to call forth his love of self-devotion in another form. The fatal war of 1870 had broken out. Next to God and His Church, the name of his country was dear to the noble heart of Paul Seigneret. He followed with an indescribable anxiety the rapid succession of disasters which befell the fortunes of France.

At the commencement of the struggle he wrote, "The obscure self-devotion of the priest can alone, at such a time as this, prevent one's regretting the inability to make the brilliant sacrifice of the soldier. Life is so small a thing that it is a happiness to find a worthy occasion for which to offer it."

To escape from the ardent longings which disturbed his mind, he took refuge in study; but soon the very thought of repose, whilst so many others were toiling and dying in the

war appeared intolerable, and he made repeated requests to be attached to one of the ambulances of the army.

His brother Charles was at Paris, and to him Paul wrote a letter, eloquent in its ardent entreaties, to this effect. Every one, however, except himself, felt this desire of his to be a generous impossibility, and even he was compelled to own his unfitness for the work, when, after taking a long walk in the hope of proving the sufficiency of his strength, he was punished by a month of fever and spitting of blood.

Scarcely was he recovered, when the unprecedented misfortunes of France brought back his eager illusions, as he said the hour was come which justified extreme resolutions, if even he were to "fall in the first ditch." One fear alone restrained him—that of doing anything incompatible with his priestly vocation.

He wrote, therefore, to his reverend director at S. Sulpice, a touching letter, in which he lays before him all his anguish and perplexities, and which concludes in the following words:—

"I am writing to you, my Father, in the silence of night, on the Eve of the Presentation. . . . *Will God, this year, grant me the favour of offering my life a sacrifice to*

Him? For it is to die for God, to fall beneath His justice, which weighs upon France. It would be so beautiful, that I cannot believe such happiness to be in store for me."

As it was impossible to yield to the longings which were, however, so soon and so fully to be granted, Paul Seigneret consoled himself by the thought that his turn would come soon, when, if not allowed the "easy duty of laying down his life for agonizing France," he should help to form a Christian generation, capable of repairing the public misfortunes, and of arresting the interior evils of the land. "In any case," he writes, "I hope to find some means of *dying* usefully, if to *live* usefully is to be denied me."

During the latter weeks of this cruel war, he had the consolation of being able to devote himself to the care of the wounded in the "ambulances" established at Sous-le-Saulnier. It is easy to imagine the happiness which he thus experienced, and the tender charity with which he visited and tended the poor sufferers, trying at the same time to leave in the minds of those with whom he came in contact "good remembrances, which should combat the prejudices and calumnies which are spread against

the priesthood, to the injury of the divine religion of our LORD."

On the 30th January, 1871, came the "ominous tidings of the armistice, as a sign of the exhaustion of France, and the prelude to a ruinous peace peace, at the price of noble Strasbourg and of unfortunate Metz; peace, with two of our provinces and our treasure carried away! We must, then, say with Jeremiah, weeping over the ruins of Jerusalem, '*Et manum suam misit hostis ad omnia residuabilia ejus.*'"

At last these days of poignant emotion and deep sadness passed by, and the state of feebleness and exhaustion which followed his too arduous exertions, convinced Paul of the unreasonableness of his late entreaties, causing him sincere sorrow and self-reproach, on account of the uneasiness he had given his parents.

The announcement of the re-opening of the Seminary of S. Sulpice on the approaching 15th of March brought a seasonable diversion to the regrets of his affectionate heart. He received the news with indescribable emotion. Believing his days to be numbered, he desired not to lose one of them. His malady being temporarily

subdued, he set out, and arrived at Paris on the day indicated. After a difficult journey, a sleepless night, and almost a whole day without food, he reached S. Sulpice pale, worn out with fatigue, but radiant with joy. For the rest, it was a happy moment to all. We were met together again after a long separation and heavy trials, to find intact this beloved house of S. Sulpice, which had been in danger of destruction from the Prussian bombs. There was so much for each to ask and relate; and all were eager to see Issy again, and to kneel once more in the cherished sanctuary of Our Lady of Loretto, which had been spared by the projectiles of the foreigner, but which was to be burnt by the Commune.

In short, every one rejoiced at the thought of resuming this life of labour, of brotherly love, of peace in GOD, which make up the charm of S. Sulpice.

Alas! all this was again to be broken in upon by a storm of fire and blood.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRISON.

ABOUT eighty Seminarists from Paris and the provinces had responded to the summons of their superiors. The exercises commenced by a few days of retreat, which were not terminated when the hateful and humiliating insurrection of the 18th of March broke out. More sorrow was caused by this outbreak of the Commune, at first, than alarm. Paris at this time presented a singular appearance. The regular Government, discomfited and in flight, had left the field open to the insurgents, who had seized the reins of power, though it was not thought possible that they could long maintain possession of them. The situation could only be expressed by one word—uncertainty. As to the rest, with the exception of the sanguinary episode of the Place Vendôme, on the 22nd of March, a certain material order prevailed in the streets, especially in the quarters on the left bank of the river, where all was tranquil, while the storm was growling on Montmartre and Belleville.

The line of conduct which this state of things seemed to indicate as advisable, namely, that of waiting until events should declare themselves more decidedly, was adopted at the Seminary of S. Sulpice, though all who preferred were perfectly free to retire.

Very few availed themselves of this permission. It cost too much to abandon, sooner than was absolutely needful, a course of life which had been so gladly resumed.

The letters of Paul Seigneret during these few weeks show him unmindful of the danger, but preoccupied with the deepest regret for the anxiety which he had occasioned his parents by his agitation during the war. The terms in which he accuses himself would appear excessive if we did not know to what a high degree he carried his veneration for his father and mother, and how insupportable was the thought of having caused them pain.

He was, also, too well aware of the real state of his health, not to be at times somewhat anxious about his future, and resolved, if the active labours of the priesthood should be denied him, to obtain permission to end his days in a cloister.

In a letter written about this time, he

says:—"We are in a singular position here. Immersed in our peaceful studies, in the midst of Paris upside-down. We are left perfectly quiet, and hear nothing of the life outside, beyond the sound of passing clamours, the entry and exit of the National Guard, and the thunder of the cannon, which they fire from time to time, in token of their independence! Ah, when will the follies of men have an end? All this can scarcely result in anything short of further bloodshed." "That which we now see is more lamentable than all our former disasters. Paris is nothing but a camp: from day to day one hears French guns firing against Frenchmen, and know not what the morrow may bring."

On the 1st of April, Paul addressed to his parents the last letter which he wrote from the seminary, and in freedom. In it he says:—"But what have we seriously to fear? Bodily injuries? No one anticipates it. Incorporation into the National Guard? In spite of the notice placarded everywhere, declaring every available citizen to be a 'garde national,' they are more occupied in taking arms away from those whom they mistrust than in creating new soldiers. To be driven from the

Seminary? If so, we should doubtless meet at Issy or at Orleans. You see, therefore, that there is every possible chance that we have nothing to fear.

"And yet, many families are uneasy, and twenty of our seminarists have left Paris. I have, therefore, been asking myself whether, to prevent your being anxious on my account, I ought not to try and guess what your wishes might be but here are sixty of us remaining quietly together with our directors, and I think that you may approve of my staying among this little community. Besides, do not fear lest I should again give myself up to these illusions of self-sacrifice, to which you saw me so long a prey. No, I stay because here I am already, and because we really see no serious danger.

"Adieu, my very dear parents. I grieve to be away from you in the midst of the bitter sadness which must at this time weigh upon every French heart. The storm darkens on both sides, and threatens to be terrible."

The very day after this letter was written, Palm Sunday, April the 2nd, the Civil War broke out, not to be quenched until it had

made heaps of blackened ruins, and shed rivers of blood.

This was the signal for the outbreak against the clergy, who were honoured by the most furious hatred of the Commune. The arrest of Monseigneur Darboy, the archbishop, on Tuesday evening, the 4th of April, that of the Jesuit Fathers, and the visits to various religious communities, gave the alarm. On Wednesday, the 5th, at noon, the pupils from Issy arrived at Paris, announcing that the "état-major," or "staff-officer," of the insurgents had installed himself at the Seminary, and was keeping the directors prisoners in the house, though the seminarists had been allowed to go free.

From this moment the peril was certain. On the advice of the directors, most of the students quitted Paris that same evening. A few, amongst whom was Paul Seigneret, believing little in the reality of the danger, or facing it, preferred to wait. Paul, however, being advised to go, resolved, notwithstanding his repugnance, to do so on the following day, in order that his parents might be spared any additional anxiety on his behalf.

Some of the seminarists who had left S.

Sulpice that evening, found that a new decree had been issued, forbidding anyone to leave Paris without a paper of permission, and were therefore obliged to return. This incident made Paul happy in the thought, that, at any rate, it was not through his fault, if his parents should suffer on his account.

On the morning of Holy Thursday, at the solemn services of the day, Paul received the Blessed Sacrament, and for the last time served at the altar in this church of S. Sulpice, in the beautiful ceremonies of which he had taken so much delight, and whither he would return no more until crowned with the glory of martyrdom.

Towards one o'clock, he repaired, with one of his fellow-students, to the Prefecture of Police, to obtain a passport; having been assured at the "Mairie" of the Sixth Arrondissement, that one would be granted, without difficulty, to any pupil of S. Sulpice not residing in Paris.

Arrived at the Prefecture, they took their place in the crowd of persons who were waiting their turn to be served with the papers of permission, when a national guard politely offered to procure for them what they wanted;

and, without the least suspicion of harm, they followed where he led them, into a room where a commander of the guard, seated at table with a woman, was finishing his breakfast. Empty bottles and glasses, and the odour of tobacco-smoke, gave to this place the appearance of the lowest tavern. The commandant allowed the two young men to make their request, and then, suddenly, as if seized with a fit of senseless rage, he cried out, "Cowardly rascals that you are! Lazy scoundrels! who think of nothing but running away, when all good citizens fly to the combat! Wait. I will give you a 'passport'—you shall have a jail-warrant, and you shall be shot! I, too, have a relation who is a priest: I only wish I had him here! he would not have very long to live.—*Never*," he added, after pouring forth every sort of insult, "never shall we pay back to you all the mischief you have done us."

Paul and his companion received in silence the explosion of fury which the sight of their cassocks had produced, but at these last words Paul said, gently, "Is it, then, to *youths* that you use such language as this?"

After a few minutes the two prisoners had

the sorrow of seeing, first two, and then three more of their fellow-students, drawn by the same perfidious invitation into the same snare with themselves.

There they remained several hours, and the whole procedure which was gone through with regard to them, and which sent both to prison and one to death, consisted in making out warrants for their incarceration at the *depôt* of the Prefecture of Police.

These first hours of captivity were the most painful of any.

"What moments were those," wrote, later, one of the prisoners, "which we passed in that hateful office! Those jail-warrants spread out before our eyes, a prison in prospect, the future hidden by a dark veil, the aspect of these armed men who came and went around us, always with blasphemies in their mouths, and, above all, the bitter thought of our friends at home, and the anguish they would suffer on our account;—was not all this enough to press like a heavy weight upon our hearts?"

They were taken to the *depôt*, where the cells being all full, they had the joy of remaining together, and also of seeing themselves

received, in the chamber where they were shut up, by six of the Jesuit fathers, who, with several of their novices and servants, had been there three days.

Here began for them a new community life, shaded by the uncertainty of the future, and painful from the numerous privations which the body had to endure, but fortified by faith and adorned with brotherly charity, and by the friendship of their companions in captivity.

Paul Seigneret was here, as everywhere else, simple, good, self-forgetting, and of an equable cheerfulness, full of the elevated and serious thoughts which were habitual to him. The day after his arrest he wrote to his director a few lines, not of resignation, but of joy:—"To be in prison, from hatred to my priestly habit, and on Good Friday; what could be more happy!"

Wishing to inform his parents himself of what had happened, he wrote to them on Easter Day.

After relating the arrest of his companions and himself, he continues:—"We were twenty-six in all, Jesuits, priests, and we, small trash, the seminarists. Our life is a veritable retreat,

being chiefly passed in various spiritual exercises, and in the most tranquil joy. I am well, and procure little things occasionally to supplement the meagre regimen of the prison. We all love and watch over each other like brothers. It is long since I have felt so thoroughly at peace, and this is an excellent condition for my health. Sleep alone is rebellious, on the hard couch which is provided, and amid sonorous sounds to which I have not yet become accustomed. My only sadness arises from the thought of you and of your anxiety; happily, at the moment of my arrest, I was making my last efforts to prevent your having any. Besides, we have, apparently, nothing to fear.

“Adieu, my very dear parents. ‘*Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus: Exultemus et lætemur in ea!*’ May God give you this joy, which is above all the sadnesses of this world!”

The sleeplessness which he mentions was habitual with him. He had, as it were, a fire within, which was rapidly consuming his frame. His countenance, which seemed to reflect his soul, acquired an expression peculiarly interesting and sympathetic, which was observed by his fellow-students, and which, of

late, at La Roquette, had become very remarkable.

The fraternal affection of the seven young captives greatly struck those who witnessed it, and one of the Jesuit Fathers told them that he recognized S. Sulpice by this sign.

Paul loved to make up for the studies of which he was deprived by serious and instructive conversation, eagerly availing himself of the resources offered by the society of the distinguished men who were their fellow-captives. Literature, philosophy, and especially the Holy Scriptures, were the favourite subjects of discussion.

His imagination preserved all its freshness and vivacity. "I remember," wrote one of his fellow-captives, "how much he felt the deprivation of the sunshine, and to what charming thoughts he gave expression when, one day at dawn, a bird found its way to the bars of our only window."

One thought, however, prevailed over all others in this prison, into which they had been thrown with expressions of so fierce a hatred, and this was, what would be the issue of their captivity? By their piety and mutual charity the prisoners softened the hardships of their

gloomy chamber, and at times sounds of gaiety, which astonished the keepers, proceeded from the listeners grouped round one of the Fathers, who possessed in a remarkable manner the gift of telling *well* an inexhaustible number of delightful stories. Yet these were but occasional distractions, which did not prevent the constantly recurring thought that they were in prison without any idea as to when or how they would be released. Behind bolts and bars, through which the light of day can scarcely penetrate, shadows deepen, and all around has a threatening aspect. They felt that at any hour they might find themselves suddenly face to face with death.

The attitude of Paul Seigneret under this expectation was not that of resignation, but of eager welcome and desire. The more he perceived the chances for this life to lessen and withdraw, the more joyfully his ardent nature offered itself a loving sacrifice to God. The hope of dying for the Faith seemed to change his words into songs of joy.

Together with his longing to be chosen as a victim, Paul Seigneret experienced to the last a horror of the kind of death which was, nevertheless, to be his own. He did not at

all fear to die ; but the thought of being massacred caused him a repugnance and shrinking which he set himself with all his efforts to overcome. His imagination represented to him a scene of tumult and disorder, in which executioners, eager for blood, throw themselves upon their victims like beasts of prey, and he spoke to his companions of this fear as simply as of his hope of martyrdom. When at La Roquette, some days before the sanguinary drama of the Rue Haxo, where he was to behold and suffer the things he dreaded, he said again, in his touching, simple way, that it had cost him a great many prayers to accustom him to the thought of this kind of death.

Nearly a week passed away without bringing any change in the situation of the prisoners. Holy Week and Easter had, for the first time, been passed without the solemn and beautiful ceremonies of the Church, and in the miserable barrenness of a prison.

Some few incidents only had broken the monotony of their life. On the day of their incarceration, Holy Thursday, in the evening, the seminarists of S. Sulpice had had the consolation of receiving the Benediction of Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris. At the

moment of his being transferred from the dépôt of the Prefecture to Mazas, the venerable prelate learned that seven of the students of his seminary had just been arrested, and paid them the touching attention of sending them a message by one of the keepers that he blessed them as his children. And on Easter Day a parcel from the seminary, containing a letter and some newspapers, reached the prisoners. It was a great relief to have some news of what was going on in the world outside, and, above all, a renewal of communication with S. Sulpice.

Wednesday, April 12th, was a day of more lively emotions, for it was then that the little community lost its chiefs; the Jesuit Fathers being restored to liberty after a brief interrogatory, which seemed to be gone through merely as a form. This event naturally gave great hopes to the young seminarists; those who had restored the Jesuit Fathers to freedom would not surely care to keep in confinement simple students who were without any sort of notoriety. Their turn would come soon; and they began to form plans as to what they would do on regaining their liberty. A question also was proposed, which gave to

Paul Seigneret an occasion of showing forcibly how he comprehended the true attitude of an ecclesiastic in confronting the Commune.

It was feared that, if they were set free, it might be on condition of their serving in the National Guard for an odious cause; in this case what line ought to be taken? Would any evasive answer be allowable in order to elude the question?

Paul Seigneret declared emphatically against the employment of any expedients. They might suffice for laymen; but it was *their* duty to guard in its integrity the habit they had the honour to wear. The thought of changing, even for an instant, the cassock of the priest for the tunic of a soldier of the Commune was revolting, and an apostasy. He would not even allow that they could be silent if the question were proposed, adding, "I will let them know my mind, if they shoot me for it."

It was not the first time that he had spoken on this subject. At the seminary, the evening before his arrest, he had asked one of the directors, "Which is best?—to die, or to serve the Commune?"

"Better die a thousand times than arm

against one's country," said the father, smiling at his ardour.

"That is well," he replied. "I thought you would say this. Now I know what I have to do." He had also said to several of his fellow-students, "Let us swear rather to die than to suffer ourselves to be enrolled in the National Guard."

But the looked-for day of interrogatory and liberation did not come. A caprice of the persecutors had now commenced a regular procedure; another caprice interrupted it; and the prison closed anew upon those who had not been fortunate enough to profit by the opening of its doors.

On Thursday, April the 13th, the seminarists were told that they were to quit the Prefecture of Police. One of the keepers, who could not help taking some interest in the fate of prisoners so different from those to which he was accustomed, said to them sorrowfully, "I believe they are going to transfer you to Mazas." In any case it was clear that no good was intended. To be ready for whatever might happen, the captives knelt at the feet of a priest, who remained with them, and received absolution.

Scarcely were they out of their cell than they found themselves in the midst of a great number of ecclesiastics, who were about to be transferred to Mazas with themselves. Their youthful appearance attracted much attention, and Mgr. Surat, Grand-vicaire of Paris, said to them, "I can understand how it is that priests and old men are here; but you, gentlemen, simple seminarists! . . . However, it is a glory for you to share in the persecution of your ecclesiastical superiors."

The transfer to Mazas was made in cellular conveyances, of which all the hostages have preserved a painful remembrance, and of which one of them has written, "My greatest humiliation during the whole of this captivity was to see myself in this vehicle. To be shut up, under lock and key, in one of these cases, where one has no air, and in which the least movement strikes you against one of the four planks which enclose you, is to be shut up alive in a coffin."

A few days before the same treatment had been inflicted on Mgr. the Archbishop of Paris, his miserable persecutors having taken care not to spare the venerable prelate this needless indignity.

For the seminarists of S. Sulpice, the entrance into the cells of this van was the end of their imprisonment in common, during which they had been able to help and fortify each other. Henceforth their life was to be more painful and isolated.

When the heavy carriages had entered the prison of Mazas, each prisoner, as he descended, was shut up separately, until it should be decided in which cell he was to spend his solitary days.

Although the prisoners could not *see* each other, yet any sound was distinctly *heard* in the adjoining cells; and one of the companions of Paul Seigneret recognized his sweet voice singing verses of the *Te Deum*, and soon after, as if in a sort of singular and joyful defiance of the Commune, humming the *Marseillaise*.

Number nineteen of the Third Division fell to Paul. There we shall see him for six weeks making the solitude of his imprisonment yield abundant consolations.

"Let the world close upon us," were his words; "and with Jesus Christ we shall always have the sovereign joy."

In about a week's time he found that the next cell was occupied by one of his best

friends, who had also shown him many kindnesses during their imprisonment at the Prefecture of Police.

Three little knocks at the wall served them for "Good morning" and "Good night," and even this was something to soften the solitude. In a letter written to his Director at S. Sulpice about this time, he says, "Time flies like a dream. I have been occupying myself delightfully of late with my New Testament. Those who are anxious about us little imagine us to be so happy as we are. Our only real privation is that of the Holy Mass, and this we feel greatly." He then warmly thanks the Father for a Bible he had just received from him. The Holy Scriptures had been his delight at Solesmes and S. Sulpice, and upon receiving this precious copy in his prison, he wrote joyfully, "And now the Commune may leave me to moulder here as long as it likes!"

From that time the days at Mazas seemed to pass too quickly, and he lengthened them by rising daily at four o'clock, and not retiring to rest until ten. Thus, at the end of his captivity, his notes and comments on his "beloved Bible" filled a thick roll of paper. These have never been found and, doubtless, perished

in the pillage of the dead, which was made after every execution.

With his time and thoughts thus occupied, the desire of sacrifice grew stronger than ever, and he one day wrote, "I hope to be the last to go out of Mazas, and, if victims are wanted, I hope to be the first."

Not long after the incarceration of the seminarists at Mazas there appeared to be some hope of obtaining their liberation, the detention of these young men being altogether inexplicable.

When Paul Seigneret heard of the efforts which were being made with this intention by the Rev. Father Director of S. Sulpice, he wrote to him as follows:—

"I know all that you are doing for our deliverance, and am deeply touched by it: only, I beg you to remark that by adoption and affection I belong to the diocese of Paris, and that I cannot think of quitting the prison so long as our Archbishop remains confined in it.

"Also, that if any victims are required to appease the Divine justice, it would be far better that I should suffer, rather than any one of these venerable priests, who may yet gain so many souls to God. I beg you to re-

flect well upon this, as I have considered the matter carefully before writing."

In one of the daily journals which reached Paul, and which contained sanguinary threatenings against the hostages, he wrote in pencil, between two of the most violent paragraphs, before passing it to his friend in the neighbouring cell, "Te Deum, my dearest brother!"

The vicinity of this friend was a great solace to Paul. By means of little raps on the partition, they gave each other signals for the times of their devotional exercises. Every evening in particular, as at S. Sulpice during the Month of Mary, the two united in spirit in placing themselves for life and death under the protection of their Mother in Heaven.

'They were able also to see each other for an instant daily, at the moment in which the one succeeded the other for the solitary walk granted to the prisoners; when from afar off they could exchange a smile and a sign of affection.

In solitary confinement these little incidents possess a great value, and were a source of keen enjoyment to the affectionate heart of Paul.

M. Hogan, a British subject, and one of the Rev. Directors of S. Sulpice, twice found means

to penetrate into the cells of the prisoners and to visit each one of them. It was with tears in his eyes, and with the greatest warmth of feeling, that Paul Seigneret received the thrice-welcome visits of this excellent and devoted priest. He was unwilling to spend a moment in speaking of himself or of his health, but was overflowing with gratitude for the sympathy which had been shown him; and spoke of France, of Paris, of those dearest to him, of his young friends, and especially of those who were confined in the same prison, without his being able to see them.

The consolation of friendly visits was however soon interdicted. Citizen Garreau, recently installed at Mazas as director of the prison, on the 5th of May forbade all visits to any of the ecclesiastics detained there.

M. l'Abbé Amable, of the clergy of the Quinze-Vingts, living in the neighbourhood of Mazas, had undertaken to convey to the seminarists, by means of a charitable woman, various things of which they were in need.

These services, rendered by persons who had no connection with them beyond the ties of common charity, deeply touched the grateful heart of Paul, who wrote, "The more our cap-

tivity is prolonged, the more we feel the numberless proofs of friendship which it brings us. We shall not leave this place without an increased love of mankind."

The hope that had been entertained of procuring the liberation of the young prisoners had vanished. One only, M. Raynal, thanks to special influences, had been set free on the 13th of May. The Seminary of S. Sulpice had just undergone the shock of a new tempest, and there remained in Paris only one of the Directors, M. Sire, able to correspond with the captives. To him Paul wrote on the 15th of May: "We ought to be grateful to the Commune to have sent out of Paris our dear M. Hogan, who did nothing but expose himself to danger for our sakes, besides imposing on himself excessive fatigue.

"Adieu, dear M. Sire. My heart sings 'Te Deum' all day long; so, you see, I am scarcely deserving of pity. Alas! while I live so tranquilly, how many are suffering in all sorts of ways!"

The French army entered Paris on Sunday, the 21st of May. The Commune, driven to extremity, was determined at least to secure its victims. On Monday evening, the 22nd,

the "Committee of Public Safety" sent to Mazas an *Order for the immediate transfer to La Roquette, (the Prison of the Condemned)—the Archbishop, all the priests, President Bonjean, and, in short, all those who might have any importance as hostages.*

A list was made out, including the name of Paul Seigneret, as well as that of M. Gard, another seminarist of S. Sulpice. These two young men were not priests, nor could they be of any "*importance as hostages.*"

But, to the men who executed this order, to be clad in a cassock was to be a priest, and "all the priests" were condemned by their title alone, independent of their name. It is this fact which sheds a glory on the death of those victims who were sacrificed out of hatred to the Faith and the Priesthood.

Two railway luggage waggons conveyed to La Roquette the eighteen hostages inscribed on the first list: and there, after six weeks of separation, the two young seminarists met again. The one who escaped death has since mentioned the profound impression which the sight of Paul Seigneret made upon him, and his bearing on this melancholy journey.

Carefully neat in his personal arrangements,

his face wearing an appearance of health which it had not for a long time previously known, his eyes remarkably clear and bright, and with a happy smile upon his lips, he looked as if he were still at S. Sulpice, on a festival.

His friend writes : " I never before saw him look as he did then ; and it seemed as if something of his sweetness and strength communicated itself to me. By his side I could not feel weak, and would willingly have been shot at that moment."

The two friends embraced warmly, and conversed naturally upon their situation, but he spoke little during the rest of the way.

Scarcely were the waggons outside the walls of the prison, when a spectacle, altogether new to him, met his sight. A hideous mob, chiefly of women and children, crowded upon the waggons, endeavouring to climb into them, and vociferating, " Ha ! There they are ! Let them be shot ! Down with the cassocks ! Cut off their heads ! To death ! To death !"

This frightful escort attended the prisoners with furious yells, and whenever a sudden movement opened the leathern curtains, shewing for an instant the figure of a priest, the clamours and insults redoubled.

Seated at the bottom of the waggon, in a place from whence he could witness these scenes, Paul Seigneret never ceased watching them. What must have then passed in his mind, full as it was of goodness and gentleness, and which found it so difficult to believe in evil? One thought, doubtless, was above any other, that his dream was about to be realised. The hope was visible in his serene and peaceful countenance, which, like those of the early martyrs, gazed calmly on the tigers and leopards that were about to devour them.

At last, about eight o'clock in the evening, the waggons reached La Roquette, and the portals of the Prison of the Condemned closed upon the captives.

Earnest endeavours were made to obtain their liberation; and one of the men employed at Mazas, in the absence of the Director, obtained from another functionary of the name of Cantrel, an order for the re-transfer to Mazas of the "two seminarists who, *by mistake*, had been included among the condemned."

The order was rejected, because the names of the two were not indicated.

Once more the "employé" made a journey, which the increasing disturbances rendered

dangerous; but by the time he had obtained another order, the progress of the struggle had made the passage impossible.

The desire of Paul's heart was to be granted.
"Et mori lucrum."

CHAPTER VI.

DEATH.

THE first moments passed at La Roquette were full of anxiety. Gathered together in a low room, dark with the shades of approaching night, the prisoners waited more than an hour, ignorant whether the succeeding one might not be their last.

There, seated on a miserable bench, in the midst of his priests, was Mgr. the Archbishop of Paris, ill, and with his features altered by suffering, but resigned, calm, and courageous in this extremity.

One of the seminarists, on seeing him, could not repress a cry of sorrow, "What! Monseigneur here!"

"There are no *Seigneurs* here!" insolently shouted a half-intoxicated guard of about eighteen years old; "here are none but *citizens*!"

At last the captives were conducted in the darkness to the first storey of the fourth section of the prison. When each one had entered at hazard into the cell, which he found open, the door was shut and bolted upon him.

A bed, consisting of a straw mattress and a poor covering, composed the whole of the furniture. Certainly it was only for a short time.

Paul Seigneret found himself separated from his companions. It was in the cell marked No. 18 that the last four days of his life in this world passed away, in a peace which nothing could disturb; with death no longer in perspective, but close at hand. "*Pater, venit hora.*"

As one window served to light two cells, separated only by a partition, the little space between this and the bars of the window allowed of communication with the inmate of the cell adjoining. Paul had for his next neighbour the saintly Abbé Planchat.*

* The assassination of this venerable priest is one of the most odious crimes of the Commune. From the day of his ordination he had quitted the higher ranks of society, to which he belonged, to devote himself entirely to the working classes, whose needs and sorrows allowed him no repose. He founded and maintained a number of good works for the benefit of apprentices, of orphans, and multitudes of poor, for

From the Tuesday evening the two captives, kneeling each in a corner of his cell, performed their religious exercises together. One of the hostages used to hear them reciting the prayers for the agonizing, and concluding the various devotions of the day by reciting the Rosary every evening. These two, who together so prepared for death, shared it together.

It is not certainly known whether, before his death, Paul Seigneret had the consolation which was granted to some of the other prisoners of receiving a last Communion. It is more than probable, and it will not be out of place to mention here the account of his own happiness in this respect which was given by M. Gard, the seminarist of S. Sulpice who escaped death.

On Tuesday, the 23rd, towards nine in the morning, the Rev. Father Du Coudray, who was his neighbour in the next cell, called him to the window, and confided to him that he had the honour of bearing upon him the Most

whom he was never weary of obtaining succour and relief. It was after twenty years devoted thus to the good of the people that the Commune caused him to be arrested, imprisoned, and massacred in the Rue Haxo.

Holy Sacrament, promising to give him Holy Communion on the following morning.

Deeply moved by this announcement, the young man fell on his knees before the wooden partition, which had thus become to him as the door of the Tabernacle, and adored his Saviour, saying, "*Terribilis est locus iste.*—Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!"

Being kept awake the whole night by the frightful noises of the sanguinary struggle that was going on in the streets, and the light of the fires that were consuming Paris, he thought with joy and consolation of this first Communion in prison, which might at the same time be his viaticum.

At six o'clock Father Du Coudray rapped at the partition, and the young seminarist received Our Lord from the hand of the priest who was that same evening to become a martyr.

If, as very possibly was the case, M. l'Abbé Planchat had obtained from any priest who possessed the Holy Eucharist a particle of the Consecrated Host, the same happiness would be accorded to Paul as that which was enjoyed by his friend.

However this may be, God clothed him with

fortitude, and shewed in this timid and gentle youth that love is stronger than death.

A common "recreation" daily re-united the hostages from the different sections of the prison, and in each section the doors of the cells were left open for a time. Thus, the prisoners were able to visit and converse with each other, which was an immense relief in these days of unspeakable anxiety, during which, while the struggle was thundering without, and slowly approaching with deliverance, the executioners within were decimating their victims.

The impression of all who saw Paul Seigneret through this terrible time was the same, and they have used the same expression of "Angelic," in speaking of his countenance and bearing.

Besides the society of his fellow-student M. Gard, he particularly sought that of a venerable missionary, M. Perny, who, after having passed his life in evangelizing barbarisms, had fallen into the hands of the more barbarous Commune.

In writing afterwards of the various traits of virtue in the victims of the 26th of May, M. Perny adds: "But what shall I say of this

Angel of S. Sulpice, Paul Seigneret ? What simplicity ! What modesty and purity of soul ! He used to come and sit upon my couch and question me about the martyrdom of our Chinese neophytes. He was too humble to tell me that his happiness was at its height to find himself *here*, but his very dreams must have been of martyrdom."

A distinguished member of the University, M. Chevreux, who shared at La Roquette the captivity of the Ecclesiastical hostages, was so struck with Paul's sweetness and serenity, that he refused to believe that the choice of the assassins could fall upon one so young and in-offensive, and his murder excited in his mind the liveliest indignation.

Another hostage, M. Evrard, who was also a layman, and sergeant-major of the 106th Battalion, writes of him : "That one of our companions, whose courage and resignation I most admired, was M. Seigneret. . . . He was of a fine figure, above the middle height, with beautiful chestnut hair, and regular features, of which the expression was not only engaging, but had in it something angelic. He had no hope of escape, and appeared detached from life, which at his age has so many attractions.

I admired in him the strength of faith, in a pure and virtuous heart. His only regret was the grief which his death would cause to his family. . . . His surprise was visible when I said that I would sell my life dearly to those miserable assassins."

One other testimony we must add, to complete the rest—that of his fellow-seminarist, M. Gard.

He writes: "I passed eight days with him at the Prefecture of Police: it was by his side that I made the painful journey from Mazas to La Roquette. In this prison of the condemned we passed together four of the most trying days. I saw him at the time when he was summoned to the massacre. On the Monday, at the Rue Haxo, I behold his body stretched on the blood-stained ground, with fifty others: and on the Tuesday evening lying peacefully in its leaden coffin in the Church of S. Sulpice. And yet none of these memories—none of the impressions connected with him—have anything about them that is painful or sad, but are full of a kind of serious joy, which the thought of his invariable gentleness, serenity, and courage, always inspires."

On Wednesday evening, the 24th of May,

took place the barbarous execution of Mgr. the Archbishop of Paris, and of five of the principal hostages. Next morning, Paul Seigneret told M. Gard that from the window of his cell he had seen them pass by to execution, and that one of the assassins perceiving him, levelled his fusil at Mgr. the Archbishop, and looked up sneeringly to the window, as if to announce, by this expressive gesture, what they were about to do, and what *he* might expect in his turn.

On the morning of the 25th the banker, M. Jecker, was marched out, and doubtless shot in some corner of the prison. On this occasion, Paul again expressed the horror he felt at the thought of being shot in some lonely place, or of being given up to the hands of a furious mob to be massacred, but that he begged of God not to let this thought trouble him.

The same day, during the time of recreation, the two seminarists spent part of the time in walking with one of the Directors of S. Sulpice, also a prisoner. The conversation was grave : they spoke of death, of martyrdom, of Eternity. Paul remarked that he looked forward to being one of the first who should be summoned, and said what a happiness it would

be to go to God. Then the three embraced and separated.

It was for the last time.

The following letter, which was the last from Paul Seigneret to his parents, was also written on this day, the 25th, on the leaf of a pocket-book, which was unexpectedly found at Versailles among numerous articles, which served as proofs against the assassins of the Rue Haxo.

“MY VERY DEAR PARENTS,

“I cannot send you a letter, but perhaps this pocket-book may come into your hands, as well as the few little matters I have with me. I thank you, my beloved father and mother, for the unbounded kindness you have always shown me. I die grieving at the thought of the sorrow which awaits you, and of the little which I have ever done for your happiness, but thankful if I can efface with my blood whatever in me may have been displeasing to you.

“I bid adieu to my dear uncle, to Alexander, to Charles, and to my dear little sister. Their happiness has always been a thousand times dearer to me than my own. I hope that God

will give them all graces and all joys, and as bright a future as I could desire for myself.

"Say to all whom I love, that the thought of them has never left me a single day, and that it will follow me beyond the limits of this world.

"I quit you for a better life, in which, as you are aware, I have long since placed all my hope and all my happiness. May you, then, in your sadness, at least rejoice a little in my joy! I shall die saying the *Te Deum*. Soon we shall be re-united to love each other for ever.

"Adieu, all you whom I love so much! You have bestowed upon me a thousand-fold more than I have ever repaid. Let us hope that on high I shall love you as I desire.

"Once more I embrace you, full of gratitude. Be assured that our separation will be only material, and also, I trust, for a very little time.*

"Your Son,

"PAUL SEIGNERET."

* A few months after this letter was written, on the 10th of December, 1871, his beloved brother Charles died of a malady brought on by the toils and privations he endured in the Siege of Paris, and during his care of the wounded. Also, fifteen days later, the father died of grief.

The day after this letter was written, Friday the 26th of May, about half-past five in the evening, a new summons was made at La Roquette, at which all the prisoners were required to be present.

Brigadier Romain, who accomplished his task with a cruel coolness, arrived with a list, and assembled all the prisoners of this Fourth Section, which had already furnished the first victims.

"Gentlemen," he said loudly, "pay attention ; answer to your names. *Fifteen are required !*"

Fifteen ! and about thirty were present. A sort of shudder ran through the company.

When the name of Paul Seigneret was called, he went simply, like the others summoned before him, and placed himself in the company of the condemned. He embraced M. Evrard, saying softly, "For a little while !" He passed before his fellow-student, M. Gard, who contented himself with grasping his hand as he passed, not for an instant doubting that his own name would follow, and promising himself to go to death by the side of his friend.

But the roll was ended, the required number being complete, and the victims, without weakness or ostentation, descended at once.

Paul Seigneret, in passing the cell of M. Petit, the Archbishop's secretary, saluted him with a gesture of adieu and a peaceful smile, as if nothing extraordinary was happening. At the prison gate, the fifteen were joined by thirty-five gendarmes. Then commenced the painful march from La Roquette to the extremity of Belleville, of which, even after the judgment of the Council of War, so few details are known. We only know that these calm and courageous victims, through all the length of their long "Via Dolorosa," were mobbed and insulted in every possible way, by multitudes of men, women, and children, who were more like wild beasts in their senseless ferocity, than human beings.

The place chosen for the shameful crime about to be committed, was No. 85 of the Rue Haxo, Cité Vincennes, the last refuge of the expiring Commune, and still a lonely and desolate place, as if a curse were upon it.

There horrible scenes were enacted, the hostages being given up to a blood-thirsty populace, who were literally mad with rage.

If we are to believe certain details, which are said to have been furnished by ocular witnesses, Paul Seigneret's death must have been

a veritable martyrdom in suffering, as well as by the sacrifice of his life.

We are told that, at the entry of the avenue which leads from the Rue Haxo to the Cité Vincennes, he was brutally struck, at the moment when he was assisting a venerable priest to rise, who had fallen beneath the blows of the rabble, and that the executioners seemed to be animated by a special ferocity against this young victim, whom they overwhelmed with blows, and dragged along the ground to the end of the enclosure in which the massacre took place.

The same witnesses say also that in the midst of his sufferings, he was heard to speak some words of remembrance of his beloved family, and of pardon for those who were murdering him, until, being utterly exhausted by fatigue and ill-treatment, he became insensible, and fell to the ground. There, supposing that he was already dead, the assassins left him, until they had accomplished the execution of the other victims, when one of these monsters, observing that he was still alive, discharged his rifle at him, the last that was heard in the Cité Vincennes on that frightful evening.

How far these details are strictly accurate,

we are unable to say: but, we know, beyond all doubt, that his death was caused by a rifle-shot in the breast.

Thus the desire of his generous heart was accomplished, and that was granted to him which he had scarcely believed to be possible.

On Monday, the 29th of May, the day after the last struggle of the contending Commune, M. Sire, Director of S. Sulpice, and M. Gard, went to seek his remains.

It was only at the prison that they learned that the last massacre of the hostages had taken place on the heights of Belleville, which had thus become, as formerly those of Montmartre, the arena of martyrs. On reaching the Cité Vincennes, they had before them a fearful spectacle. Twenty bleeding corpses had already been drawn out of the trench in which the assassins had heaped their victims, and the rest were in course of being also removed from thence.

Amongst the bodies which were stretched upon the ground, the seekers had no difficulty in recognising that of Paul Seigneret.

He lay with his eyes closed; his face perfectly intact; white as alabaster, and without any stains or contractions. There were no

traces of decomposition, and his countenance had that peculiar expression of serenity which had become so observable during the closing days of his life. His cassock, which was soaked in blood from the wound in the breast, was also pierced lower down by several bullets. He had upon him his Rosary, the Little Office of the Holy Virgin, and the New Testament. His body was borne to the Church of S. Sulpice, where it remained that night, and was, on the following day, enclosed in a triple coffin.

On Wednesday, May the 31st, a solemn Requiem Mass was sung, at which were once more brought together the priests of S. Sulpice and their disciples, the witnesses or victims of the mortal struggles of the past terrible weeks.

The fellow-students of Paul Seigneret, his brethren of Mazas and La Roquette, served at the Altar, where one of the Directors of the Seminary offered the Holy Sacrifice.

He, GOD's chosen one, was also there, reposing in his glorious death: present upon earth in his sanctified remains, and present, doubtless, in spirit, and in remembrance of his fathers and brethren, before the Throne of GOD.

The Office being ended, the body was temporarily placed in the vaults beneath the

Church of S. Sulpice, but the same thought had occurred to all, that the place for the young martyr was at Issy, in the crypt of the Chapel of Our Lady of Loretto, which forms, as it were, the heart of S. Sulpice.

A year, however, passed away, before it was possible to put this design into execution. In the first place, it was necessary to raise up the walls of this beloved Sanctuary, from their ruins.

On Thursday, the 27th of June, 1872, a few days before the commencement of the vacation, the translation of the remains to the Seminary of Issy took place.

None who were present at this solemnity will ever forget it.

In the two Communities, who were assembled in the entrance-court to receive the body of their young martyr, there was not one present in whom the name of Paul Seigneret did not awaken sweet and holy recollections. The priest who presided at the ceremony was the uncle of Paul, and the same to whom, from his childhood, he had been accustomed freely to open his heart, and to whom he bore a most tender and reverent affection.

The Ordinary Prayers were said, according

to the rules of the Liturgy, and a Mass of Requiem was sung in the Chapel. At the same time, the office was less one of mourning than of triumph, and those who were assembled to pray around this coffin, upon which lay the white surplice of the departed Levite, and which was adorned with lilies and white roses, felt more of joy than of regret.

The ceremony took a still more touching character, when, after the Mass, the coffin was borne from the Seminary Chapel to the vault prepared to receive it in the crypt of Our Lady of Loretto.

It was remarked that a lively affection for him whose memory they were honouring must have prompted the preparations for this festival, (for such it was). The walks of the garden and park were adorned with arches of verdure, and decorated as if for a triumphal march. At various distances the paths were overhung with garlands of foliage, enwreathed with red and white flowers, the symbols of Virginity and Martyrdom.

Beneath these advanced the two long files of Priests and surpliced Seminarists, singing the "*Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*," and followed by the rest of the procession.

When the coffin had been placed in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, the *Te Deum* was intoned, as if by a sudden inspiration, every voice responding to this note of triumph. It was not named in the programme of the ceremony, but was a spontaneous expression of the feeling of all present.

The body of Paul Seigneret reposes under a slab of white marble, engraved with emblems often found on the tombs of the martyrs in the Catacombs, and with the following inscription :

Hic Quiescit
 Paulus-Maria-Joseph-Claudius-Seigneret
 Clericus
 Seminarii Sancti-Sulpitii Alumnus
 Qui Puer Ingeniosus et Sortitus Animam Bonam
 Vitam Brevem
 Sed Caritate in Deum et Homines Eximiam
 Constantique Crucis Christi Desiderio Flagrantem
 Sanguinis Effusione
 Gaudio Exultans Complevit
 Parisiis Die xxvi Maii An Dⁱ. MDCCCLXXI. Ætatis xxvi
 In Odium Religionis Trucidatus
 Desiderium Cordis Ejus Tribuisti ei
 Domine. (Ps. xx. 2.)*

* Here rests Paul-Mary-Joseph-Claud Seigneret :
 Tonsured Clerk, and Student of the Seminary of Saint

Thus we have arrived at the close of this short life, which, although for the most part so bare of extraordinary incidents, was so full of merit in the sight of God. We may imitate the virtues of a martyr's life, though few dare hope to win the glory of his death; but the prayers of those who, through suffering have won their crown, gain strength for us, the feebler pilgrims, who far down the mountain side, are toiling upwards, often in dimness never in despair, towards our Home.

PARIS, May, 1873.

Sulpice : a youth admirably endowed with excellent gifts. His life, which, though short, was filled with love towards God and men, and consumed with desire for the Cross of Christ, he joyfully offered up by the shedding of his blood, at Paris, May 26th, 1871, in the 26th year of his age, being put to death out of hatred to the Faith.

"Thou hast granted him, O Lord, the desire of his heart." (Ps. xx. 2.)

THE END.



